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ABSTRACT

Support services in the schools, such as guidance counseling, have been and are necessary and integral components of an ever-changing educational agenda. Guidance remains a vital responsibility of education. This study collected a variety of job-related and professional information from counseling personnel (N=147) who provided services to early adolescents in the middle level schools of Utah. The 21-page questionnaire addressed the following areas: counselor titles, qualifications, and experience; counselor perceptions regarding adolescence and support for their work; counseling services and techniques; and perceptions of and recommendations to state-level education agencies. The results of this survey illuminated several obstacles to the effective provision of counseling services in the middle level schools of the State of Utah as well as highlighted areas of focus for general counseling service reform of the state. The average student-counselor ratios were reported as being 41% above the recommended student caseload as specified in the Northwest Association for Schools and Colleges. Over 67% of the counselors perceived themselves as more of an administrator than counselor. Lack of parental support, money, time, and guidance, as well as ill-defined roles were listed as problem areas. (Recommendations for program improvement are included.) (BHK)

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**A SURVEY OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS
OF
EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN UTAH**

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Abstract

Middle grade schools -- junior high, intermediate, and middle schools -- are potentially society's most powerful force to recapture millions of youth adrift, and help every young person thrive during early adolescence. How well young people cope with these changes and demands and how they deal with the tasks of adolescence will significantly influence the course of their lives. The ability of young people to respond to new challenges depends on their personal capacities coming into the transition and the degree to which they are supported by a network of caring relationships. In this regard, support services in our schools, such as guidance counseling, have been and are necessary and integral components of an ever-changing educational agenda and guidance remains a basic and vital responsibility of education. This study collected a variety of job-related and professional information from counselors who provide services to early adolescents in the middle level schools of Utah. The results of this survey illuminated several obstacles to the effective provision of counseling services in the middle level schools of the State of Utah as well as highlighted areas of focus for general counseling service reform outside of the State.

A SURVEY OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS OF EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN UTAH

The "Middle Level" School: A Psychosocially Pivotal Institution

Middle grade schools -- junior high, intermediate, and middle schools -- are potentially society's most powerful force to recapture millions of youth adrift, and help every young person thrive during early adolescence (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989). Early adolescence, especially in the United States, is a vortex of change. Concurrent with individual transformations, youths often experience dramatic shifts in school environment, the peer group, and the family. How well young people cope with these changes and demands and how they deal with the tasks of adolescence will significantly influence the course of their lives.

During early adolescence, young people begin to make decisions about their self-worth, the worthiness of others, and the value of education, health, work, and citizenship. For many youth, early adolescence is one of the last real opportunities to affect their educational and personal trajectory. The middle grade school, one of the key socializing institutions for early adolescents, represents a critical "turning point" in the lives of American youth (Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989). In essence, middle level schools are where young adolescents come to understand what is happening to them, what is happening in their world, and what is going to happen to them in their future (Johnston, 1987) and, as such, need to be staffed with people who care about helping these youth develop the understanding that leads to a healthy, productive adulthood.

For most early adolescents, the shift from elementary to junior high school means moving from a small neighborhood school and the stability of one classroom to a larger, more impersonal institution, typically at a greater distance from home. In the new setting, teachers and classmates will generally change as many as six or seven times a day, creating real obstacles to students in establishing stable peer groups and close relationships and support from caring and reliable adults (Simmons, Rosenberg, & Rosenberg, 1973; Blyth, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). The change is abrupt and discordant for the student, particularly in terms of the impersonality and anonymity of the environment. At a time when intimacy needs remain strong, these changes are likely to present difficulties for many youth (Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989). Most early adolescents know well and trust few adults in school and lack access to health care and counseling. As a result, far too many of these youth fail to receive the guidance and attention they need to become healthy, thoughtful, and productive adults (Hamburg, 1989; Dryfoos, 1990).

School Counselors and Early Adolescents

The ability of young people to respond to new challenges depends on their personal capacities coming into the transition and the degree to which they are supported by a network of *caring* relationships. Adequate resources allow young people to respond in ways that enhance their development. Inadequate supports leave early adolescents vulnerable to many potential threats: school failure, poor mental health, early pregnancy, substance abuse, delinquency, and violence (Dryfoos, 1990). Clearly, too few children are making it through their adolescence easily; indeed, too few are making it through their adolescence at all. When adolescents are spoken with -- from urban students to those in rural districts, from cheerleaders to troubled students -- one message is loud and clear: "We need someone we can talk to who will listen and help us with making decisions." This message is a plea for help (Kean, 1989).

Caring is crucial to the development of early adolescents into healthy adults. All youth of this developmental period need guidance as they move through this critical period replete with a variety of biological, psychological, and social changes. There is a crucial need for the middle level schools to help early adolescents to acquire (a) durable self-esteem, (b) flexible and inquiring habits of mind, (c) reliable and relatively close human relationships, (d) a sense of belonging in a valued group, and (e) a sense of usefulness in some way beyond the self (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989).

In this regard, support services in our schools, such as guidance counseling, have been and are necessary and integral components of an ever-changing educational agenda and guidance remains a basic and vital responsibility of education (McEwin, 1981). Yet, it is all-too-common for guidance counselors in middle grade schools in the United States to be responsible for 500 or more students (Otto, 1982), and far too many counselors spend an inordinate amount of time engaged in administrative or clerical activities (Hannaford, 1987; Remley, & Albright, 1988; Ritchie, 1989). Guidance counselors are extremely valuable members of school staffs, but reliance on one or two counselors in a large middle grade school amounts to a failed solution to a critical problem (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989). Students do not receive the guidance they need and counselors spread their talents and training impossibly thin.

Objective

The objective of this study was to collect a variety of job-related and professional information from counselors who provide services to early adolescents in the middle level schools of Utah. Data were collected in the following areas: (a) position titles; (b) terminal levels of education and experience as a counseling professional; (c) school locales and socioeconomic levels; (d) student-counselor ratio; (e) direct/indirect service provision to students and staff; (f) perceptions of the relative seriousness of a variety of physical, educational, social, and emotional problems of early adolescents in middle level schools; (g) primary counseling technique/approach; (h) educational and psychological assessment responsibilities; (i) existence and perceived counseling utility of teacher-advisor (TA) programs; (j) perceived levels of support from parents, teachers, and local school/district administration; (k) supervision and opportunities for district-sponsored professional development; (l) counselor-parent meetings and educational/counseling opportunities for parents; (m) types of clerical/administrative constraints on student service provision; (n) perceived priority for the state-level education entities of the each of the eight recommendations for middle level schools made by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents; and (o) recommendations counselors would make to the Utah State Office of Education and the Utah State Board of Education.

Method

Three copies of a twenty-one page survey (to accommodate three counselors per school) were mailed to the counseling departments of all middle, junior high and intermediate schools (n=113) in the State of Utah during the spring of 1990. The mailing was followed up with reminder phone calls at two-, four-, six-, and eight-week intervals.

Results

Seven schools (6%) returned the surveys because they did not have a counselor or no one serving in a counseling role. As such, the number of schools that had at least one counselor or a staff member serving in a counseling role (e.g., the vice-principal) was 106. Staff at 9 (8.5%) of the 106 schools declined to participate in the survey. Thus, the total response rate to the survey was 91.5% (97/106 schools). A total of 147 surveys were received. Fifty-two percent of the respondents were female.

Position title. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents were either "school" or "guidance counselors;" five and one-half percent were "guidance specialists" or "school social workers" and five and one-half percent were administrators (principals, vice-principals) serving in a counseling role.

Levels of education and years of experience as a counseling professional.

Approximately 8% of the counselors had a Bachelor's degree level of terminal education. Since the Master's degree is the requisite entry-level degree for a certified counseling position, these counselors are technically "unqualified" for their positions. Thirty percent of the respondents had a Master's degree, 58% had 15 to 45 quarter hours of credit beyond the Master's degree, and 4% had a Doctorate degree. The average number of years of experience as a counseling professional was 9.7 years (range = 1 to 36; median = 6 years).

School locales and socioeconomic levels. Sixteen percent of the schools were located in urban locales, 59% were suburban settings, and 25% were in rural areas. Regarding socioeconomic levels, 5% of the schools were classified as "lower," 36% as "lower middle," 37% as "middle," 19% as "upper middle," and 3% as "upper."

Student-counselor ratio. The average number of students to whom each counselor was responsible for providing services was 563. This number of students is 41% over the 400:1 counselor-student ratio specified by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (1990). Even more striking and of greater moment is the fact that 73.5% (108/147) of the counselors reported student-counselor ratios greater than 400:1.

Direct/indirect service provision. The average amount of time being spent per week in direct service, individual (student- or counselor-initiated; 1-to-1 basis) or group (group intervention: special affective topics (e.g., divorce, loss), interpersonal/educational concerns (e.g., social skills instruction, study skills)) with students was 55%; the average amount of time being spent per week on indirect service provision (e.g., teacher/administrative consultation, inservice instruction) was 45%. Seventy-two percent of the counselors reported that they were responsible for providing direct counseling services to students served in special education programs (e.g., learning-disabled students, behavior-disordered students); 89% said that they were responsible for providing indirect counseling services to special education students.

Counselor-perceived seriousness of physical, educational, social, and emotional problems of early adolescents in middle level schools. Counselors were asked to rate, based on their personal experiences with individual students and groups of students and their interactions with school staff and administrators during the past school year and separately for males and females, the relative seriousness, on a four-point scale (1 = Not a problem; 2 = Slightly serious problem; 3 = Moderately serious problem; 4 = Serious problem), of 14 problems common among adolescents. The problems were: (1) alcohol use; (2) use of drugs other than alcohol; (3) heavy smoking; (4) sexual promiscuity (females) or making someone pregnant (males); (5) sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs); (6) family-centered problems (e.g., marital discord, inadequate finances); (7) chronic, debilitating stress and anxiety; (8) depression; (9) suicidal ideation/suicide attempts; (10) physical/sexual abuse; (11) school failure and/or underachievement; (12) eating disorders (anorexia/bulimia nervosa); (13) serious crime (e.g., theft, robbery, assault); and (14) delinquency (e.g., chronic truancy, running away). The most serious problems among male early adolescents were: (a) school failure/underachievement; (b) family-centered problems; (c) delinquency; (d) depression; (e) chronic stress and anxiety; (f)

alcohol use; and (g) heavy smoking. The most serious problems among female early adolescents were: (a) family-centered problems; (b) school failure/underachievement; (c) depression; (d) delinquency; (e) chronic stress and anxiety; (f) use of drugs other than alcohol; and (g) sexual promiscuity.

Primary counseling technique/approach. For those respondents who indicated a primary counseling technique or approach when provided with descriptions of eight paradigms (n=142), 38% reported having a "reality-centered" approach, 27% a "client-centered" approach, 23% a behavioral approach, 11% a rational-emotive/cognitive-behavioral approach, and 2% a Gestalt approach.

Educational and psychological assessment responsibilities. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents reported being responsible for conducting the group educational achievement testing in their school(s). Seventy-five percent of the counselors reported that the results of group achievement tests are actually used in planning students' educational programs; 25% reported that the tests are administered solely for recording a score that is subsequently "filed away." Data from 118 respondents indicate that 30% are responsible for conducting individual psychological assessments of students and 39% conduct individual educational assessments. Of those who conducted individual psychological assessments, 80% felt that they had been trained adequately; 85% of the respondents who conduct individual educational assessments feel qualified to do so.

Existence and perceived counseling utility of teacher-advisor (TA) programs. Forty-eight percent of the counselors reported having a teacher-advisor (TA) program operating in their school. If counselors currently had a TA program or if a TA program had been operating in their school in the past but had been discontinued, they responded in the following ways to questions about the efficacy of the TA approach to provision of student services: (a) How effective do you feel the TA approach is in preventing mild problems from becoming worse? -- 29% felt the TA approach was not effective, 62% felt it was somewhat effective, and 9% felt it was very effective in preventing mild student problems from worsening; (b) How effective do you feel the TA approach is in identifying more serious problems of students? -- 31% felt the TA approach was not effective, 55% felt it was somewhat effective, and 14% felt it was very effective in the identification of more serious problems of students; (c) How effective do you feel the TA approach is in referring students for counseling services? -- 28% felt the TA approach was not effective, 54% felt it was somewhat effective, and 18% felt it was very effective in referring students for counseling services.

Overall levels of perceived support from parents, teachers, and school and district administration. Fifty-four percent of the counselors felt that parents were very supportive, 60% felt that teachers were very supportive, 77% felt that the school administration was very supportive but only 45% felt that the district administration was very supportive. Forty-five percent of the respondents felt that middle level school counselors were very important to the state-level education entities; 49% felt that the state-level education agencies considered them somewhat important. Ninety percent of school counselors reported that their principal believes they provide a vital service within their school.

Supervision and opportunities for professional development. Seventy-five percent of the counselors reported having a district-level supervisor with whom they could discuss professional issues and receive support for professional concerns. Of those respondents who reported having a district-level supervisor, 64% said that the supervisor had training and experience as a secondary school counselor. Eighty-six percent of the respondents reported that their school district provided them with inservice/professional development opportunities. However, many counselors commented that the topics and foci of the inservices were chosen by non-counselors at the district level and were not relevant nor specific enough to benefit them in their work with early adolescents. Of those counselors who reported having district-sponsored availability for professional development, the average number of opportunities per year was four.

Counselor-parent meetings and education/counseling opportunities for parents. The average number of formal opportunities (i.e., during scheduled parent-teacher conference days) per year that schools/districts provide for counselor-parent meetings was two. Four percent of the respondents reported no opportunities, five percent reported one, 61% reported two, 14% reported three, and 16% reported four to seven opportunities. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents reported that their school district has a central facility which serves the needs of families by offering parent education classes and/or short-term counseling. Of those respondents who reported that their district did not have such a central facility to serve families, 50% stated that their district does provide opportunities for parents to participate in parent education or child development classes and various support groups.

Constraints on effective service provision. Sixty-seven percent of the counselors often felt that they were more of an administrator than a counselor and that their time is frequently spent managing the school rather than helping students (administrators (n=8) were removed prior to this analysis). Among the types of administrative activities cited were: (a) scheduling students (58%); (b) performing clerical/secretarial tasks (50%); (c) engaging in hall or lunchroom supervision (30%); (d) dealing with attendance problems (30%); (e) mediating teacher/staff conflicts (25%); (f) meting out discipline (23%); and (g) attending various administrative meetings (19%).

Thirty-eight percent of the counselors responded to an open-ended question regarding constraints on effective counseling service provision. Of all the constraints cited, unrealistic student-counselor ratio topped the list (54%). Additional constraints reported were: unclear or ill-defined role (considered more of an "administrator") (16%); lack of money (e.g., for salary, hire more counselors, provide more support staff) (14%); lack of facilities for group intervention (11%); lack of time (to do all of the things that which need to be done or which are expected) (11%); lack of a concrete, comprehensive guidance curriculum (9%); lack of adequate training for crisis intervention (e.g., child abuse, suicide) (9%); lack of funds for in-school counseling program (9%); lack of secretarial/clerical assistance (7%); lack of support from parents/home (7%); lack of staff cooperation (e.g., teachers are reluctant to release student from classes) (7%); lack of school psychologists and social workers (5%); and administration-imposed constraints on referrals to outside resources (e.g., therapists, pediatricians) (4%).

Perceived state-level priority for the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents recommendations. Regarding the perceived priority to state-level education entities of the recommendations for middle level schools made by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (1989), counselors responded accordingly:

Recommendation #1:

Create small communities for learning where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The key elements of these communities are schools-within-schools or houses, students and teachers grouped together as teams, and small group advisories that ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult.

Not a priority	= 18%
Low priority	= 29%
Medium priority	= 33%
High priority	= 20%

Recommendation #2:

Teach a core academic program that results in students who are literate, including in the sciences, and who know how to think critically, lead a healthy life, behave ethically, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society. Youth service to promote values for citizenship is a part of the core academic program.

Not a priority	= 4%
Low priority	= 8%
Medium priority	= 37%
High priority	= 51%

Recommendation #3:

Ensure success for all students through elimination of tracking by achievement level and promotion of cooperative learning, flexibility in arranging instructional time, and adequate resources (time, space, equipment, and materials) for teachers.

Not a priority	= 10%
Low priority	= 40%
Medium priority	= 27%
High priority	= 23%

Recommendation #4:

Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students through creative control by teachers over the instructional program linked to greater responsibilities for students' performance, governance committees that assist the principal in designing and coordinating school-wide programs, and autonomy and leadership within sub-schools or houses to create environments tailored to enhance the intellectual and emotional development of all youth.

Not a priority	= 11%
Low priority	= 30%
Medium priority	= 41%
High priority	= 18%

Recommendation #5:

Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and who have been specially prepared for assignment to the middle grades.

Not a priority	= 5%
Low priority	= 21%
Medium priority	= 26%
High priority	= 48%

Recommendation #6:

Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents, by providing a health coordinator in every middle grade school, access to health care and counseling services, and a health-promoting school environment.

Not a priority	= 13%
Low priority	= 41%
Medium priority	= 35%
High priority	= 11%

Recommendation #7:

Reengage families in the education of young adolescents by giving families meaningful roles in school governance, communicating with families about the school program and students' progress, and offering families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at the school.

Not a priority	= 3%
Low priority	= 22%
Medium priority	= 40%
High priority	= 35%

Recommendation #8:

Connect schools with communities, which together share responsibility for each middle grade student's success, through identifying service opportunities in the community, establishing partnerships and collaborations to ensure students' access to health and social services, and using community resources to enrich the instructional program and opportunities for constructive after-school activities.

Not a priority	= 6%
Low priority	= 31%
Medium priority	= 31%
High priority	= 32%

Counselor recommendations to state-level education entities. Thirty-nine percent of the counselors responded to an open-ended question regarding recommendations they would make to state-level education entities. The recommendations the counselors made were: (a) reduce student-counselor ratios (53%); (b) provide pertinent, quality inservices and outreach training opportunities (28%); (c) clarify counselor roles (25%); (d) provide secretaries, clerks, and registrars (23%); (e) provide school psychologists and/or school social workers (21%); (f) increase salaries/provide a 12-month contract (13%); (g) adopt and implement the recommendations of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (7%); and (h) coordinate school and student needs with community resources (5%).

Conclusions

The results of this survey illuminate several obstacles to the effective provision of counseling services in the middle level schools of Utah as well as highlight areas of focus for counseling service reform.

1. Nearly three-fourths (73.5%) of the counselors reported student-counselor ratios greater than the 400:1 student-counselor ratio specified in the *Standards for Accreditation* (Northwest Association for Schools and Colleges, 1990). The average student-counselor ratio was 563:1, 41% above the recommended student caseload. Among the constraints to effective service provision reported by counselors, student-counselor ratio was number one (54%).

2. In addition to an absurd and unmanageable student-counselor ratio, many counselors also delineated several system-level impediments to serving students. Among these were (a) an unclear or ill-defined role, (b) lack of money to hire more counselors and support staff, (c) no facilities for group intervention, (d) too little time to complete all of the tasks that are expected, (e) no comprehensive guidance curriculum, (f) no or inadequate training to handle crises (e.g., child abuse, suicide), and (g) too few clinical support staff (e.g., school psychologists and social workers).

3. Only 54% and 60% of the counselors, respectively, felt that parents and teachers were very supportive of their efforts. Less than half (45%) of the counselors believed that they were very important to either to their district administration or state-level education entities.

4. Over two-thirds (67%) of the counselors often perceived themselves as more of an administrator than a counselor and felt that their time is all-too-frequently spent managing the school rather than assisting students. The top six types of administrative activities cited were: (1) scheduling students; (2) performing clerical/secretarial tasks; (3) engaging in hall or lunchroom supervision; (4) dealing with attendance problems; (5) mediating teacher/staff conflicts; and (6) meting out discipline. Comprehensive counseling and guidance programs suggest that time spent on "non-guidance/clerical activities" be zero (Hayslip, Carr, & Randall, 1988; Starr & Gysbers, 1988). School counselors should not be perceived by administrators, parents and teachers as "paper shufflers" (Kuwana, 1991). Paying a counselor to do two hours or more of paperwork daily is a waste of expensive and valuable time. Principals seem to appreciate school counselors and feel that they provide vital services within the school, yet, concomitantly, expect the counselors to provide inappropriate administrative assistance.

5. With regard to the eight commendable and proactive recommendations for middle level education proffered by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (1989), most counselors, more than half of the counselors on each recommendation (52% to 89%), maintained that the recommendations were not a high priority for the state-level education entities. Clearly, the recommendations should be seriously reviewed by a state-level task force to "determine what must occur to enable their adaptation to the needs and circumstances of local communities" (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989, p. 81).

6. Although this survey found that over one-half (55%) of counselors are engaged in both individual and group direct service provision, as has been found in previous research (Hannaford, 1987; Kameen, Robinson, & Rotter, 1985; Remley & Albright, 1988; Ritchie, 1989), school counselors clearly have too many administrative duties and are responsible for too many students (Otto, 1982; Kuwana, 1991) to be effective in helping early adolescents. There is ample evidence that when school counselors are present in schools with workloads which allow them to provide direct counseling and consultation services, students' academic and social performance improves (Smith, Glass, & Miller, 1980; Bundy & Poppen, 1986; Garfield & Bergin, 1986; Ritchie, 1989).

7. In this study, the most serious counselor-reported problems among male and female early adolescents were school failure/underachievement, family-centered problems, delinquency, depression, chronic stress and anxiety, use of alcohol and other drugs, and sexual promiscuity. Many problem behaviors of early adolescents appear to be interrelated. Early adolescents who smoke and drink often experiment with illegal drugs and early, unprotected sex as well. These same youth are also prone to school failure (Dryfoos, 1990). They are not merely exploring new behaviors, in short, but trying out lifestyles that become more entrenched as they mature (Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989).

Recommendations

Based on the data provided by this survey and the agenda for middle level schools proposed by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents (1989), the following recommendations are made to state-level and local education agencies who develop policies which impact the everyday professional lives of middle school counselors and, subsequently, the early adolescents whom they serve.

1. Hire more counselors to reduce the student-counselor ratio to the 400:1 level recommended by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (1990).
2. Increase base salaries and provide a 12-month contract for counselors.
3. Eliminate from counselors' roles all non-guidance responsibilities such as substitute teaching, hall and cafeteria supervision, busy duty, class schedule development, dealing with attendance problems, and meting out discipline.
4. Hire secretaries, registrars or trained paraprofessionals to perform tasks such as registration and scheduling of students, disseminating and maintaining of information, coordinating testing, maintaining educational records, and managing the school clinic.
5. Hire more school psychologists and/or school social workers to conduct individualized psychoeducational assessments, to provide clinical consultation to teachers, administrators and other staff, and to work with at-risk early adolescents and their families.
6. Provide quality inservice opportunities which are germane to counselors who work with early adolescents (e.g., outlining of crisis intervention procedures for parasuicide, suicide and other deaths, presentation of current research in the area of early adolescence which is counseling-related).
7. Provide outreach training opportunities for teachers, especially those in rural districts, to obtain counselor certification.
8. Supply facilities for counselors to work with groups of students; provide adequate and private workspace.

9. Adopt and implement the recommendations for middle level schools made by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents.

10. Work to coordinate school and student needs with community resources.

Clearly, the one essential element necessary to implement the foregoing recommendations is financial support. Those persons responsible for allocating funds for education should be made aware of the critical shortage of middle level school counselors and the increasing responsibilities placed on the school counselor. Middle level school counselors encounter tremendous difficulty in providing effective services to early adolescents in our middle level schools.

An effective middle level school counselor must be prepared both in skills and in time to respond to the expected and unexpected needs of the students. Hannaford (1987) has stated that "the ultimate purpose of the counseling service is to assist students in understanding, accepting, and utilizing their own personality traits, recognizing their aspirations in relation to their aptitudes, developing their potential to the optimum, becoming more self-directed, identifying ways to solve problems that hinder self-development, and developing a more positive self-concept" (p. 7). However, too many students for too few counselors who are involved in too many non-guidance activities amounts to a failed solution to a critical problem. The confusion, uncertainty, and alienation that young people experience today mirror problems that past generations have not faced. Increases in adolescent depression and suicide, use of drugs and alcohol, and the growing number of single-parent families present staggering issues for our society at large. In addition, today's counselors are touched by conditions that professionals of the past were not, such as the effects of unemployment, the rising rate of adult alcoholism, and the alarming prevalence of physical and sexual abuse of children and adolescents.

Middle level schools cannot meet all these needs alone and these social conditions cannot be laid solely at the feet of counselors, of course. Crime, violence, and the public's disillusionment with the quality of education in general also have contributed to a disaffected view of counseling services in the school (Carlson & Lewis, 1988). To fulfill their functions, middle level schools must operate at the center of a network of community resources that includes local government, health services, youth-serving organizations, private businesses, and the philanthropic sector (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989). Franklin Roosevelt once said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." Middle level school counselors can make a difference in the lives of young people. Indeed, they can even save lives. The following line from a Flannery O'Connor short story, *"The life you save may be your own,"* reflects the need for critical examination and prompt change within our nation's and, specifically, Utah's middle level schools. A proactive alliance of middle level school counselors, teachers, parents, administrators and local communities enables us to save not our own lives directly, but the lives of millions of young people, and, in doing that, we save the lifeblood of our society (Kean, 1989).

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